THE BULLETIN

of the

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

of

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

MARCH 1955

Volume XXX Number 3

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155 E. Ohio Street
Chicago 11

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Effective interpretation of school social work is an essential and ever-present responsibility of every school social worker. Mr. Nebo examines many facets of this responsibility, including areas in which interpretation must be done, the individual worker's role in interpretation and some methods which may be used with school personnel and with the community.

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MENTAL HYGIENE LOOKS AT EDUCATION—

This article analyzes some of the factors which facilitate learning, with particular reference to the importance of the relationship between the teacher and pupil. Methods of in-service education to develop improved teacher attitudes are also examined, with stress on participation by the teachers.

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Mrs. Clara Bryant gives an interesting and thoughtful analysis of the evolutionary process which led to the present constructive casework approach in the development of compulsory attendance services. The relationship of attendance services to child welfare services is described with a nice appreciation of the interrelatedness of the two services and the influence of the child care concepts of different periods.

INTERPRETATION OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES[1] TO EDUCATORS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS WHO SERVE THE SCHOOLS[2]

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The total profession of social work is greatly concerned with interpretation of its services whether the interpretation is to clients, board members, contributors or the general public. In like manner, educators have been vitally concerned over recent attacks on the public schools and are seeing anew the need for interpreting what the public schools are doing and what they represent. School social workers have a double responsibility in the area of interpretation as they are representatives of one discipline operating within a setting designed primarily for the practice of another discipline. Doctors, nurses, psychologists, and representatives of other disciplines functioning within the public schools find that they also have this dual responsibility. On the other hand, all these non-teacher professionals have an advantage over professionals operating in their traditional setting. If they are able to interpret their specific functions to other school personnel, they will make allies who, in turn, will interpret these functions to other groups in the community. For example, in many communities of Illinois, school nurses, teachers or principals have explained (with understanding and conviction) the role of the school social worker to parents, teachers, and others. Conversely, the school social worker, as a member of a school faculty, has a responsibility to understand, support, and interpret the various services, as well as the policies of his school system.

One of the most important groups with which the school social worker is involved and to which he must interpret his services are those professionals who work within the walls of the school. Among this group of personnel are superintendents and their assistants, principals and regular classroom teachers, doctors, nurses, and psychologists, educational and vocational guidance personnel, educational supervisors, and

[1] Title given to School Social Workers in Milwaukee.

[2] Paper given at Wisconsin Education Association Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, November, 1954.

teachers of special classes. There are other school personnel who very often are closely associated with children in school and who may wield great influence on individual members of the study body. Among the members of the secretarial and office staff, the cafeteria employees and the janitorial and maintenance staffs, there are warm, giving persons to whom children naturally gravitate and whose understanding and interpretation of school social work can be of great help.

Interpretation means explanation and there are many methods by which this can be achieved. It cannot be stressed too strongly that the most effective interpretation is accomplished by the school social worker's daily contacts as he moves among his colleagues in the school which he serves. Basic to his job of interpretation are his skills in casework practice and his ability to be a helping person. However, equally important are his skills in relating to teachers. The teacher-pupil contact is the most important adult relationship in the school experience of each child. Therefore, with mutual sharing of their knowledge and understanding, the teacher and the school social worker strive to reinforce this relationship. Through this sharing, the teacher learns about the social worker's function. There is carry over value in this process as the teacher utilizes the knowledge and applies it to other children. As she sees change in some of the children whom she has referred, the teacher will be able to illustrate with concrete examples the service of school social work to other teachers and other professionals within the school. It should be remembered that the bulk of referrals come from teachers who detect early symptoms of difficulty in the classroom and who, with deeper understanding of the difficulty, can help the child change. It is clear that the teacher, as the chief referral person, must know and understand the worker and his service.

Administrators, including superintendents, principals, curriculum coordinators, supervisors and others, are vital to the work of the school social worker. Through the demonstration that children can change with casework help, these administrators will understand and appreciate the value of the service. However, here again, it is necessary that the school social worker share his knowledge and understanding of the capabilities and limitations of individual children, and use the administrators in their respective roles to help children to adjust in school. Administrators should be aware of what is happening to children in their school. The school social worker helps with this awareness particularly through sharpening the administrator's understanding of children in difficulty. The principal, for example, is in a key position to interpret the service

to teachers who have not utilized it previously, and the principal's attitudes and understanding of school social work will influence the attitudes and understanding of all personnel in the school under his jurisdiction.

Obviously, the most important single person who must have a realistic understanding of the value of the service is the superintendent of the school system. He is the person who interprets the service to the board, initiates the establishment of the program and takes the lead in presenting the concept of the service to other key personnel in the school system. I recall one superintendent who had real conviction regarding the value of school social work which he had seen demonstrated by a capable school social worker in his schools. When he left that community in 1951 and went to another, he wanted to have the service in his new district. He asked me to meet with him and his principals and, after I had done so, he wrote to me saying that the time for the establishment of the service was not right as his principals were lukewarm about the idea. Two years later, he asked me to meet with him and his principals again and I was most impressed with the increased understanding and acceptance with which the principals approached the subject. This year, they have a school social worker. She has found a receptive and eager staff. I attribute these changes in attitudes on the part of school personnel to this particular superintendent. His conviction of the value of the service combined with his sensitivity to the attitudes of the staff and his willingness to wait until the staff was ready provided a sound basis for the program.

The collaboration of other special service personnel within the school is vitally necessary to the effective functioning of the school social worker. The psychologist, the nurse, the remedial reading teacher, the supervising teachers, the speech correctionist, the doctor, all have a specialized knowledge about some of the children with whom the school social worker is concerned. They are as eager to utilize the worker as a resource as the worker is to use them. This implies, of course, that the school social worker will have a sound knowledge of his own profession, of its integration into the school system in which he is employed, and a thorough knowledge of that school and its policies. It also pre-supposes that the school social worker will have an understanding of the other professions' competencies and an appreciation of the team approach and the efficacy of this approach. He must realize that he cannot work alone and that the child about whom he is concerned will be touched and influenced by many other persons in the school during a day.

Of great importance in the interpretation of school social work services is the manner in which the worker becomes part of the faculty. His professional colleagues usually see the school social worker as a person before they see him as a professional worker. They note the way he dresses and how he is groomed, they see the way he talks to them and to children and parents. They see whether he is relaxed in a new situation, whether he is aware of rules and regulations of the school system and how he reacts to these rules. As time goes on, they watch to see if the school social worker takes on equal responsibility for serving on committees and other functions which they, as teachers, assume as extra-curricular activities. They are aware of how active or inactive he is in participating in groups outside the school—whether or not he assumes responsibilities as a citizen of the wider community. As they get to know him and to accept him as a person, they are more ready to accept him as a professional colleague.

The school social worker must understand school policies and procedures and adapt his work accordingly. Sometimes these policies and procedures are not based on principles which will contribute to sound mental health for the student body. This is always a difficult situation, but it offers the social worker an opportunity to contribute his knowledge and understanding in the revision of the unsound practices of the school. Care must be taken to not move too quickly in these areas but a skilled worker will know when he can begin to effect a change. As an example of this area of responsibility an Illinois community can be cited. Unfortunately, there is more than one school district in Illinois which allows uniformed police officers to come to the school and take children to the police station for questioning without the consent of the parents. In one system, the school social workers have been working for two years, through a series of conferences and individual contacts with police and school officials, to change this practice. Early this fall, the policy was established in this community that no child can be taken from school by anyone except a member of his immediate family who has been properly identified. In this community, it was the school social workers who were primarily instrumental in changing an unsound practice.

All school social workers must have examined their own feelings about their own school experiences and must have worked through any hostility toward authority as exemplified in the teachers, principals, and other school personnel with whom they work. Not all school social workers begin their careers with ambivalent feelings regarding teachers but each worker should have done some soul-searching about his early

school experiences and the relationship which he had with teachers when he was young. As a matter of fact, anyone employed by a school system should look into his own feelings about authority. Only when a school social worker can work comfortably with teachers and other school personnel and can view them as colleagues will he be able to successfully interpret what he is doing with the child whom both he and they are serving.

Attitudes regarding case records may have an effect on the acceptance of school social work by a faculty. It is true that case records must be confidential; but, if the knowledge and understanding of the child contained in these records is not shared verbally with teachers and others, much of the value of the record is lost. Concern has been expressed on the part of some workers that records will become part of the school file or that teachers will demand to read the files. Although confidential files should not be thrown open to anyone, in most of the instances in which a teacher requests to read a file, it is because the worker has failed to share verbally his knowledge of the case with the teacher. Most teachers have no desire to add to their responsibilities by reading case records, but they will resent withholding of information which would help in their understanding of children.

These observations about records and feelings toward authority are made because they connote attitudes which, if held by a worker, will negate any attempt at interpretation. An attitude of "specialist" which connotes to teachers a "superior" status assumed by the worker is fatal. Only when he accepts the fact that the casework function in a school setting is supplemental to the primary function of the school which is to provide the best possible educational opportunity for all children, will the school social worker be accepted by school staffs and be given the chance to "interpret".

In addition to the interpretative aspects of day-by-day contacts, there are other methods of interpretation. Constantly there are opportunities to talk about the function of school social work and why it is in the schools. Important as is the interpretation which comes from demonstration of professional skills, the worker is often asked, either formally or informally, "What do you do?" This may be a question asked conversationally by a teacher who has seen the worker around the school and has wondered why he is there. It may also be the question which invites the worker to speak formally to the total faculty or to a part of it. In either event, the response should be thoughtful and professional. Usually the person asking really wants to know. Care

should be taken not to be vague about the function of school social work. It is true that the processes of social work are not easy to define, but we do have a body of knowledge which can be explained. A letter from the Director of Special Education in an Illinois community demonstrates this point:

> "This year we are making a concerted effort to strengthen our program. In analyzing statements that we have made about the program we found that we have all been guilty of saying such things as 'It is very hard to evaluate the results of this program. It's very difficult to explain just what the counselor does. Since this program is not confined to a classroom, one cannot see this program in operation.' I am sure you are aware of many of the other statements which have been made which would lead teachers to feel that not only do they (teachers) have a hazy concept of the program but that the counselors themselves must have a hazy concept of the program. We have become guilty of overgeneralization. We talk about 'helping a child learn how to handle his feelings about others, providing a listening post for a youngster, contacting the various social agencies that can contribute to the adjustment of the child.'
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> "This year we are making a concerted effort to show teachers that we do have a definite program, we do have objectives for our program for each child, we do know *when* and *where* we are going to see a child, and we are going to proceed on a hypothesis which has been derived from case study. We are attempting to delete the generalities from our explanations."

On the other hand, "over-selling" our services can be a pitfall. There are limitations and these should be understood by us and by our colleagues. Casework alone is not sufficient for some children with problems requiring specialized psychiatric service. There is danger in "over-selling" psychiatry also. I recently listened to Dr. Nicholas P. Dallis, the Toledo psychiatrist who is the creator of *Dr. Rex Morgan,* the cartoon strip which has done much to further the public's understanding of illnesses and handicaps. In addition to refusing to reveal if Rex and June would be married, Dr. Dallis quoted Judge Jerome M. Frank discussing the role of the psychiatrist in legal procedures. As I remember the quotation, Judge Frank said, "I am not advocating surrendering legal decisions to the mental experts. I wouldn't. I respect them for their competencies, but I think that we need to be aware of the

trend to make the psychiatrist the sole hero of contemporary culture." Dr. Dallis went on to say that he liked the phrase but that it made him realize that his profession had been oversold to the public. He further mentioned, that, while shaving the next morning he was thinking of the phrase and, as he held his chin higher, suitable for the "sole hero of contemporary culture," one of his three children bumped into him. He concluded that it was difficult to maintain a hero's dignity when the hero had to share the facilities of a bathroom with three children.

In addition to talking with individuals and telling groups about our work, staff conferences of groups of teachers and other school personnel regarding an individual child will contribute to the understanding of that particular child and will help all concerned regarding further plans. Simultaneously, these conferences will present an opportunity for the school social worker to interpret his service and to gain more understanding of his professional colleagues' roles in the school. They will highlight how each professional contribution is different in the common goal of helping children. In working with representatives of such professions, either in groups or individually, awareness of their previous knowledge of the service is needed and interpretation must begin at the level of the other person's understanding. For example, a teacher who has a sister who is a school social worker will probably be aware of basic concepts of mental health and would resent a beginning explanation needed by a teacher who had never heard of the function of school social work.

Along with his individual face-to-face contacts, his contacts with groups and his general impression on the staff, a school social worker can interpret his service by directing specially prepared written material to his professional colleagues. Brochures which interpret school social work can be devised to interest teachers and other professionals. Care should be taken to make this kind of written material attractive and concise with the primary aim to arouse interest in the service as well as to give a bird's eye view of what it is. It is impossible to cover all the ramifications of the service in this kind of written material and, therefore, it should be carefully edited. Long treatises which attempt to cover all phases of the job will go unread, for teachers are busy people and have much to read. Colorful material with an eye catching drawing or design done in an unusual format will attract more attention than the usual "Memo". When a teacher asks for a deeper understanding of children's problems, she can then be given a more professional kind of literature. And a word of caution regarding "social work" terms. Although each

profession has its own jargon, the jargon of another profession is meaningless—either in written material or the spoken word.

Annual and monthly reports are helpful to the superintendent and other administrators in their understanding of the service. Narrative supplements to accompany these reports will make the statistics more meaningful. Care should be taken that any case material in these narrative reports prepared for general distribution should be disguised if case examples are used. Some school districts reproduce these reports for school board members, who, although not part of the professional staff, can be key people in interpretation of the service. Some workers attend an occasional school board meeting and present their program verbally so that the members of the board can understand and support it.

Emphasis should be made of the fact that any methods of interpretation must be adapted to the individual community in which a worker is employed. What might be highly successful in one community might be a very poor method in a different community. In considering the use of services and methods used by other workers, it is important to determine whether they are suitable for the person who plans to use them for his school district. I recently read an article about school boards in "The Rotarian" which urged boards to work out their own programs and not to blindly adopt the policies of boards in the next town. As school social workers, we can learn from a statement from this article. It quoted Dr. John Bracken, Superintendent of Schools in Clayton, Missouri, as saying, "Boards used to wonder about the craziest things. I remember the board which wrote to an educator wanting to know how short a teacher's skirt should be and got this terse answer, 'Don't know. Have to see the teacher first'."

Interpretation of the job of the school social worker is an integral part of his function and is a never-ending one. Faculties change, new principals replace ones who have known us, new teachers are hired, some teachers are more resistant to new ideas than others. We should be encouraged by the growth of school social work throughout the country during the past thirty years. More and more administrators on both state and local levels are realizing that casework service is needed in schools to insure a more complete experience for many children. Superintendents and school boards who are thinking about beginning the service call on school social workers from communities with established programs for interpretation and guidance. More school social workers should accept this function as their responsibility. One state program

began several years ago when the State Superintendent, who was attending an educational conference, attended a meeting at which a school social worker described the services to children given by school social workers and the resulting contribution to preventive mental health in the school. The superintendent realized then that there was a professional discipline to provide what his state had been wanting for their children. This state now has a widespread program.

Another encouraging development is that most schools of education are offering courses stressing the understanding of the emotional and social development of the individual; and, as teachers with this understanding are coming into our schools, the school social worker's interpretation of his function in relation to the growth and development of children will become more meaningful.

Finally, we must remember that successful interpretation is a long, slow process as well as a never-ending one. When I began my work as a school social worker in the public schools of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1938, each worker was serving a school population of about 12,000 children. When I left Pittsburgh in 1948, the average population per worker was reduced to about 8,000. Just last week I learned that plans have been approved to hire enough personnel so that each worker will be responsible for a school population of 2,000 children. This recognition that more effective service can be given by school social workers when they work with fewer children has come about by a process of interpretation on the part of many people. But it has taken sixteen years.

MENTAL HYGIENE LOOKS AT EDUCATION[1]

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In every age and every society, responsibility for important areas of the training of the young has been delegated to other agents than the parents. The use of the nursery governess and the boarding school by the British landed gentry is to us as natural a custom as is the choice of special leaders to initiate adolescents into the tribal culture among more primitive peoples. The duty of such parent-surrogates has always been the same: to perpetuate the prevailing culture. But today's culture in our country is so complex that the demands made on teachers are without precedent. For natural science has not only multiplied the amount of knowledge within each culture, but by making communication easy, it has accelerated cross-culture as never before.

We have perhaps not recognized as thoroughly that the human sciences as well as the natural sciences have played into this picture in a way to give further pause to the teaching profession. It is the human sciences which have made us increasingly aware that not only what is taught, but *who* teaches it, and *how* he teaches it are in themselves cultural determinants. While it is true that character was always considered in the choice of a tutor, merely a general picture of honesty, sobriety and conscientiousness was demanded. If the honest man was dour or peppery and caned the slow pupil, no matter. If his conscientiousness was coupled with dullness or compulsiveness that tended to crush the young spirit and dampen his interest in knowledge, who knew or cared? But today we ask of a teacher that he like his pupils; that he choose the teaching career not by default but by positive choice; that he work with the age group he best understands; and that he encourage personality growth rather than merely implant facts. For the human sciences have taught us that only within a good relationship can most students, young or adult, learn at their maximum. True, some will always learn, no matter what the obstacle. A Lincoln will learn where there is no school and a genius will find his way even if he is expelled from the university, as many have been. But today we want *all* the children to learn, each to his own potential.

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[1] Reprinted from *The Quarterly* of the *National Association of Deans of Women*, March, 1954.

Thus, while previously no one inquired too closely why a child left school, today with the raising of the age for compulsory attendance all over the United States, we are beginning to ask what is wrong with the school when youngsters wish to leave. Besides, we now ask what kind of teacher is needed to pass on the gifts of the culture to all our pupils, and especially to those who in earlier generations were left to drift to work which exploited them or to street corner gangs, while only a small remainder marched on in the grades. We note too that curricula are being revised to bring to the next generation of citizens what they need for intelligent everyday living—consumer education, driving lessons, family life discussions, community visiting, world history, science.

Even more startling than the changes in subject matter, however, are the changes in method. The teacher is no longer the only vocal authority in the room, the only one who gives information without being questioned. Today the pupils move about in class and community, see with their own eyes what goes on, and join in discussion about it. Beyond curriculum and method, however, there is a more important change. This is the still faint, but growing realization that the *relationship* between teacher and pupil is the actual primary factor.

Relationship is the soil and the sunlight in which the human plant flourishes. During the 1920's a first-class home for infants in New York City was dismayed to find that children under its care, with the best medical and nursing service available, were backward in talking and walking, as well as less curious and spontaneous than children of the same age in their own homes. When these babies were placed in foster-homes, some of them not nearly as clean and as well run as the institution, the babies began to laugh and learn. The Board of Directors of the infant home realized then that children learn best when they feel themselves loved and valued. The nurses had been dutiful but impersonal, according to the prevailing instruction of those days; the foster-mothers were warm. They cuddled the babies even if they made mistakes in the formulas—and the children responded.

The child learns through a relationship for many reasons: because he wishes to please the one who loves him; because he is made to feel secure enough in his little world to reach out to unknown things and people; and because he imitates the loved person, striving to make part of himself, the ways of that person, including his knowledge, his ethical standards, and his ideas. This is why the character of the teacher and his relationship to his students of any age is so central to learning. The Bureau of Child Guidance of the New York City Board of Education

became strikingly aware of this when the WPA made a number of tutors available for children with reading disabilities. These tutors came with very different kinds of teacher-training and some without any. It was soon found that no one method of teaching was the only successful one. Actually, every method was found to work once the pupil really believed that someone at last had faith that he *could* read and cared enough for him to make him want to try.

To care about the youngsters comes first—and no one can fool them. Former Assistant Superintendent Obermeier of New York City tells of the class that proved too much for five substitute teachers in quick succession. At last one was found who could manage them and she remained. "I see you like your new teacher," said the principal one day, and a pupil replied, *"She likes us".*

Next in importance to liking young people in general, the teacher should have the desire to know each one in particular well enough to give him a modicum of help in the way he needs it. The teacher who managed a class of fifty-four as ably as a class of thirty-four, provided they all did their French assignment every day, did a fine job; but her day was over when we stopped dropping the ones who did not take to languages naturally. When everybody's child remains in school, the teacher must care about individuals. But the parents who pay the taxes need to know that her classes must be smaller, and that she needs an assistant teacher. She herself needs to learn to observe more keenly; to use the results of more objective testing; to listen more and talk less; to hear what parents have to say. She needs at times to call upon the guidance counselor, the nurse, the attendance officer, the school social worker, the school psychologist, the psychiatrist, and many other special school or community teammates to strengthen her efforts. The teacher is no longer working alone; but she still retains the pivotal position. Next to the home, which is first both in closeness and in time, comes the school. Every child remembers some teacher even if he has forgotten his doctor and his pastor. The pity of it is that so many of us remember a teacher who was a rigid disciplinarian, as have countless generations of adults.

Giving the teacher's love of the child so central a place does not mean alienation from the parents. "Love" is used here in its broadest sense, as it was used in the gospel which spoke of "faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love". (Perhaps there is nothing so very new in this concept from the field of mental hygiene, after all.) The teacher's love is different from the mother's and the pupil himself expects this

to be so. The teacher's love is transmitted through her professional offering and it is differently manifested for children of different ages. She may take a frightened child of five on her knee. She does otherwise for a frightened child of fifteen who cannot grasp new subject matter because his mind was torn with conflict at an earlier time, when he was supposed to be learning the elements of the subject. Physical contact is no longer the appropriate remedy here. But neither does general solicitude or well-meant exhortation really meet the need. A half-hour alone with the student in patient, kindly teaching of rudiments he never learnt —this would be the teacher's most appropriate gift of love. Many teachers are willing to stay after school to lecture a child or even to "interview" him, as is our newest fashion, when what the child really wants from his teacher is that she *teach* him what he needs and wants to know. What he needs also is the kind of teaching that makes him feel he *can* learn and wishes to learn. Such a true expression of interest as this is sometimes given insufficient recognition because it is unspectacular.

Returns from questionnaires to students about teachers have shown that little preference is given teachers on the basis of age or youth, beauty or plainness. Invariably, the favorites appear to be those from whom they learn, and those who are fair. Translated into the mental hygiene concepts we have been citing, this means, curiously enough, that the pupils' favorite teachers are precisely those who achieve the task society has set for them—namely, transmission of the culture. Moreover, they are those who achieve it through good relationship with all their pupils.

There has been much confusion about classroom relationships not only in the public mind but in that of the profession, as the pendulum has swung headlong from the authoritative teacher-centered classroom to the student-centered one. Today the pendulum is swinging slowly back to the middle where mental hygienists would keep it. The teacher must remain the leader, not only by reason of age, experience and training, but because he is the exponent of the culture. He must be a democratic rather than an autocratic leader, making of his pupils participants with him and with their peers in the great adventure of learning. He has knowledge they need to possess and character they will emulate. He imparts to the classroom the security of a plan and a framework, which all children need. This framework the fearful pupils need for their comfort, the rebellious as a guard against their own aggression, and all for the proper functioning of the group. For all must learn to live as

individuals who neither exploit the group nor fear it. They develop their own potential so as to give to the community, which is now the school and later the nation, their very best and in order get the best from it.

Mental hygiene has asked teachers to give up sarcasm, verbal castigation, and punishment that relieve their own feelings but do not solve a child's problem. It has never advised teachers not to be firm. To be firm does not mean to be punitive. To be kind does not mean to be wavering, indecisive, or indifferent. The teacher must know his road but he need not make it a rough one. By this, one does not mean that teachers may never raise their voices or lose their tempers. A class that knows how the teacher feels about it in general, can take more than an occasional outburst without any harm. The important point is that the teacher realize she is solving her own problem at the moment rather than accomplishing a great deal with the class.

The crucial problem in most schools is that teachers were trained in quite another style than that now expected of them. How then can we help our teachers to develop different attitudes and other ways of working? The first solution that usually suggests itself is in-service education. One problem with this is that courses are apt to fall into two categories, both of them disappointing. On the one hand lies the pitfall of the highly theoretical course given by a supervisor who has learned all the words but who, as some one has aptly said, does not know the music. Such a course is merely frustrating to those who take it in the hope of gaining practical help. At the opposite extreme is the workshop given by a fellow practitioner, from which the teacher may learn a number of devices, but which leaves her without any general philosophy on which to depend for solving situations different from those which came up in the course. The answer seems to be workshop courses in which the teachers participate in the learning process, as we now expect pupils to do, and where the leader not only has experience but also the convictions that what he is teaching is good for children and can be applied in a classroom. The instructor may be a seasoned educator or an experienced person from the mental hygiene field—in either case, a person who knows the problems of the other profession. Sometimes the use of two people from different fields as co-leaders of a workshop makes for a valuable balance between theory and practice.

In the teaching of adults, as in the teaching of children, continuity of leadership is important. The instructor who puts his name on a course and proceeds to make of it a series of lectures by different celeb-

rities is falling back on a traditional mode of education we no longer think good enough for pupils or teachers. Adults, like children, learn best through a sustained relationship with an informed and devoted leader. As the course leader puts into practice the principles of mental hygiene in his relationship to his adult students, in just that measure will he give them the incentive to incorporate the knowledge he imparts and more especially the attitude he exemplifies, for use in the classroom. One way then to help teachers rear our children differently from the way that they themselves and we were reared is to have them live through such emotional experiences themselves with their instructors and with their peers as just described, so that new attitudes become sufficiently part of them to change their teaching behavior.

In New York City, the Board of Education has found a more intensive way of meeting this same problem in mental hygiene, namely, by individual interpretation to teachers regarding pupils in their classes with whom work is being done by a clinical team. The team consists of a psychiatrist, a psychiatric social worker, and a psychologist, one or all three of whom may be in touch with the student and his family after a referral from the school. Findings and recommendations resulting from the study and treatment of the pupils are arrived at by a process of team consultation, even though only one member may be actively involved and even though only one visits the school.

In such a situation, the teacher learns more readily about mental hygiene because she has a stake in the adjustment of her pupil. She also is apt to gain more through individual help than through group teaching. Finally, she is likely to retain concepts better because she "learns by doing" in actually becoming a member of the clinical-educational team.

Not every community affords these school-connected services; but almost every community has somewhere in its neighborhood a psychiatrist, a psychologist, or a social worker. The contribution of the first two professions named is treated elsewhere in this issue of the JOURNAL.[2] Therefore, it may not be amiss to note here something of the contribution of the social worker. It is perhaps not generally known that social workers from a graduate school of social work have been grounded in the dynamics of human relationship and may be used as a resource in the training of guidance personnel and for consultation regarding children with problems. Even in small cities there will usually be one member on the staff of a local social agency who has had this full pro-

[2] *Journal,* National Association of Deans of Women, March, 1954.

fessional training. In addition to their rather unique training in mental hygiene, social workers develop skill in determining the need for and locating other types of professional help required in given situations. A student may be saved a shift from day school to boarding school or to another college if consultation can be obtained from a local social agency accustomed to dealing with human problems on the basis of arriving at a psycho-social diagnosis before entering on a course of action.

These specialists will not supplant our deans and counselors; they will merely supplement their skills. In our experience the better the dean's background in mental hygiene the more likely she is to use the mental hygiene resources of her community.

Thus far, we have dwelt on in-service training for teachers. Even more important is the type of training the teacher or counselor gets before she receives her certificate. It is encouraging that courses in mental hygiene are finding their way into college curricula. Too often, however, they are given by academic instructors rather than by the clinical people who work daily with the troubled. Furthermore, in some institutions of higher education there is a curious lack of integration among the psychology, sociology and education department offerings. It would seem urgent not only that content be better integrated but that the teaching at all levels and in all departments be itself suffused with the humane and democratic attitudes that foster mental health and maturity in the students. For today's teachers deal with children in a society that allows them the utmost leeway in expression without having yet provided them with the hygienic rearing which would make possible this full expression *along with* conservation of optimum values for the group. To prepare teachers and counselors to give children such rearing, we need specific mental hygiene instruction by those who are themselves familiar through clinical practice as well as through theoretical study with the present understanding of normal and deviated human development. But beyond this, we need such a climate of learning throughout the halls of higher education as will foster the students' growth as human beings. In such a climate, learning to potential becomes an inevitable natural process. In any climate, good or bad, unconscious incorporation and imitation of the true inner essence of the instructors' attitudes will result. Shall we not then look again at *who* teaches our teachers, if we wish to make our children the builders of a newer world?

THE EVOLUTION AND BROADENING CONCEPTS OF ATTENDANCE SERVICE[1]

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"Laughter is a boy" was the title of a recent television show which was broadcast on "The Medic" series. Significant and appealing, this title, but not surprising to us in 1954, because the concept that "Laughter is a boy" is so accepted and seems so right.

Children are young human beings, we say today, with needs which are unique to them, it is true, but individuals nevertheless, with rights, with privileges, and with responsibilities of their own. We assume that adults, both individually and in groups, have as inherent in their family, professional and social relationships, certain grave responsibilities for the decent progress of their young from the earliest days of infancy through childhood and the difficult adolescent years to the threshold of their own manhood and womanhood. That every child has not yet been endowed with the certainty of receiving his utmost benefits from the individuals or the social groups to whom he is related does not deter us in our conviction that he should and that he has the right. We all know not one but many children whose greatest needs, emotional or physical, are going unmet because their parents cannot or will not provide them, or because the institutions in their communities are not geared to meet them. But basically we believe with utter certainty that he deserves better, and we grow justly indignant at the forces which are withholding from him those gifts, spiritual, emotional, physical, which could bring him out of the shadows and into the sunlight.

The shock to us is not that "Laughter is a boy", not even that this is not always so—but rather the fact that only very recently have the pages of history revealed this as a basic principle in the ideology of a people.

Memories of the individual love of a particular parent for his own child, his sacrifices and his yearnings, are as old as history itself. It is

[1] Paper presented at Annual Convention, National League to Promote School Attendance, October 20, 1954, St. Louis, Missouri.

the concept of a larger and more widespread assumption of responsibility for this love, sacrifice and yearning to which we now turn our attention.

The evolution of the attendance service is a part of this development in all fields pertaining to the welfare of our children—and for us who are engaged in this work, the most personally significant part. It is essential to keep in mind, however, that just as the present-day concept of attendance work is vastly different from its early beginning, so are the present day concepts in the broader fields of education and of social casework almost inconceivably different from their early beginnings. We are part of a whole, and it is natural and right that we should want to look with special concern at this particular part.

Any real study of this evolutionary process would involve leafing back through the pages of history in order to concern ourselves with the relationship of the parent, the state and the child in the latter's educational process as it developed in the various epochs of history.

It is also difficult to ignore the fact that the devolopment of child welfare services parallel to considerable extent progress in the area of compulsory education. Foster home care, so well known to us now, had its beginnings in the last half of the 19th century also, and only towards the close of the century did public foster home placement plans gain impetus. Orphanages, which cause us some concern as we contemplate them today as sources of care for children, are comparatively new in history and a tremendous step ahead of the almshouse which had come into effect in this country after 1700, and in which children were housed along with the feeble-minded, the aged, the physically and mentally ill. And even these, horrible as they sound today, were an advance over the system of indenture which had gone before. Arthur Fink, in his review of "The Field of Social Work", states that "merely because one system of child care was an advance over another, it did not necessarily follow that that system became the final answer".

On this note, it seems timely to look at the specific area of development with which we are most directly concerned, the development of concepts of compulsory attendance in America.

In the early days of the American colonies, the English common law principle that a father had unlimited control over the education of his child, applied until it was later modified by statute.

The first compulsory attendance laws in America were those of Connecticut and Massachusetts in colonial days. There was a hint of a

compulsory attendance law in Rhode Island in 1840, but the year 1852 marks the first really modern law of this kind. We can hardly forget the year of that law or the fact that this legislation was passed in the state of Massachusetts if we recall that just one hundred years later, in 1952, the National League to Promote School Attendance held its annual convention in the hospitable city of Boston. Certainly it is most appropriate that the League should be kept in mind as we review this development of compulsory education in recent history, for by its own advent and progress it had been a pace-setter in the movement.

By the year 1918 each of the forty-eight states had passed its now compulsory attendance law, and the statute books throughout the land proclaimed the belief of its people that each of their children not only had the right to the benefits of an education but the obligation to secure these advantages.

Thus something new had been added to the educational scene—the belief affirmed through legislation that the state has the authority to force a parent to provide an education for his child. There are still choices for the parent—the *kind* of education for instance—for there is no law which states that a child must attend a *public* school or which denies the child the right to be privately tutored. But the will of the state now supersedes the will of the parent in the final choice of . . . to educate or not to educate his child.

Conflict and problems are bound to arise when any human will, individual or collective, is imposed upon another. This came quickly in particular cases, and the appointment of attendance officers followed on the heels of the attendance laws.

In Pennsylvania, for instance, the first compulsory attendance law was passed in 1895 and just two years later the first Philadelphia attendance officer was appointed.

It is easy to be patronizing or critical of those earlier ways of working. We say, and with truth, that in its early history attendance work was characterized by a punitive approach leading to negative concepts such as the truant officer and the "hookey-cop". But what more could any of us have brought to this work at the turn of the century, before the fields of education, social casework, psychiatry and psychology were developed to endow us with deeper understanding and broader insights?

Today we have less excuse. We have the benefits of the creative thinking, research, writing and plain hard work of our many professional

predecessors. We should know better—and to do as well as our earlier colleagues, in relation to the advantages of modern knowledge, we need to do a maximum of creative thinking for ourselves.

One major piece of psychological knowledge which is basic in our work is the fact that sheer force to break another's will is likely only to strengthen it. The individual may succumb to our superior strength or dominating position, but change he will not unless something different can happen within himself.

Awareness of this important concept makes us smile at the naiveté of our predecessors when we see a badge and pair of handcuffs which were once used by an attendance officer in his work. We are horrified when we read that in 1918 a case was heard in a New York court in which the mother of a twelve-year-old boy claimed to have been injured when the attendance officer, attempting to arrest her son, put a chain on her arm and twisted it in order to compel her to let go of the boy.

All that was bad. It was, moreover, ineffectual and could never bring about any real change; and when methods fail, there is bound to be a search for newer, better ways of accomplishing the ends we have in mind.

The 1920's marked a period of awakened interest in the individual child, his behavior and his needs, as of primary concern to the attendance worker.

In Philadelphia, 1921 marked the assignment of a social caseworker from the staff of a private agency, the White Williams Foundation, to the staff of the attendance service. The agency was engaged in counseling service within the schools on an experimental basis which continued until that service was incorporated as the school system's own in 1942. Reports in the early 1920s urge that qualifications for attendance officers be increased, with the inclusion of "at least some knowledge of social casework". Training on the job and courses at the local school of social work were also being stressed during this period.

The year 1926 also marked the establishment by the Board of Education in Philadelphia of a residential school for boys who were habitual truants. This school, which is called Shallcross, is a symbol of the interest and concern on the part of educators and the community as a whole in problems of truancy, and certainly marked a new high point in constructive efforts to find ways of helping. Leaders in the movement to establish the school which is located in the extreme outskirts of the city,

on ninety-seven acres of farm land, included Municipal Court Judges as well as numerous other community agencies and civic leaders. A full time attendance officer was assigned to this school from its early days and today the staff includes two counselors in addition to the principal, teachers, nurse, houseparents, etc.—a staff of twenty-nine in all.

Reports and studies of the 20's indicate over and over that leaders in attendance work were recognizing the need to understand the child, and the concept of truancy as a symptom of trouble instead of as an act in itself which merited punishment rather than interpretation.

Today the very topic of this conference and the nature of our discussions here warrant the assumption that we are wholly engaged in the proposition that truancy is a symptom of maladjustment and that we recognize the existence of the broad gamut of casual factors found within the individual himself and in external forces in his home, school and community.

Towards this end we are engaged in seeking deeper understanding of the child, his development and needs, of behavior as we meet it in adults as well as in children, of school and community resources on which we are dependent in our search for means to help the child in trouble.

Qualifications for work in the attendance service have risen in relation to the school's and community's understanding of the professional nature of this work. In Philadelphia there have been open competitive examinations for the position of attendance officer since 1906, but in those early years the only requirement to take that examination was that the applicant supply three letters of reference. Some years later high school graduation was added as a requirement, but rather half-heartedly since a "preliminary examination" could be given those who could not thus qualify. It was 1928 before qualifications for attendance officer were made the same as those for elementary school teachers—at that time two years of post high school training. Today, we require, besides college graduation, that the applicant pass the National Teachers examination, have at least one year's experience in teaching or social work, including counseling or attendance work, and then pass the local written and oral examination which presumes some knowledge of school structure and resources, school and child labor laws, community resources, understanding of behavior and casework methods.

Certainly no one applicant is a master of all these fields, but the significant fact is that we direct our attention towards these areas of

knowledge and skill. In the 20's a "Social Service Unit" was set up within the attendance service in Philadelphia, with special workers assigned to do the "social service". Following the same trend of thought, Dr. F. V. Bermejo, in his study of American cities published in 1923, expressed the opinion that "attendance officers should have general familiarity with casework techniques and, if they can, adopt some of it to their own work".[2]

In asking ourselves the question, "Where have we gone since the 20's?" perhaps we should note this as a major change. We no longer have a "Social Service Unit" but hold ourselves more broadly responsible for awareness of the value of casework skills and for finding opportunities to learn more of these skills as we operate on the job. We no longer tread so gingerly as to say that attendance officers should, if they can, adapt some social casework skills to their own job. We say boldly that his is a casework job.

Dramatic changes have marked the last quarter century in all aspects of life, and major world upheavals have catapulted us into new problems and have greatly accentuated our old ones.

The stock market crash of 1929 immediately preceded a decade of shocking depression years. Educators and social workers came close to the raw misery of the unemployed, the destitute, the newly impoverished, as our children and the families of these children turned desperately for help. It was in the 30's that public assistance came into the picture throughout the nation, and Social Security became an established, legal fact. Instead of a few chiefly privately supported social agencies established to help the "needy", there came into sudden being large-scale public agencies, based on the development of a broadening social conscience at a time of frightening economic upheaval.

Private social work had to begin defining its job more clearly as public services took over some of the functions which they had hitherto assumed. As educators have constantly been asking more clarity of themselves in determining *how* to teach and *whom* to teach and *what* to teach, so social workers have been asking, "What is the specific job which I should be doing in this agency? What skills are the same as those required for working in my neighboring agency, and what skills are different?"

The attendance service has moved along with all of this, certain

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[2] Bermejo, F. V., Ph.D., *The School Attendance Service in American Cities.*

now of its part in the educational set-up and becoming increasingly aware of its kinship with the expanding world of social service. Many new school services have come into being since the infancy of attendance work, and it becomes incumbent upon us to define our function both in itself and in relation to these other services so that the child will stand to receive the maximum gain from his total educational experience. Our responsibilities are heavy—for knowing about the other services, for making our own service known to those others, and for interpreting the needs of the children we meet to the curriculum planning bodies of our schools and to the child welfare groups of our communities. Above all, it is essential to build upon the premise that the thoughtful handling of absence must start with the teacher and be shared responsibly by other school personnel, under the direction of the principal, and by the attendance worker.

In the Philadelphia School System we have under one Division of Pupil Personnel and Counseling, three related services—pupil personnel (which includes child accounting and attendance work), counseling,[3] and employment certification.

The methods which workers in each of these services must use are similar in that sound social casework principles are similar, whatever the setting; but the roles of the three kinds of workers are different in that each has a unique reason for existence.

If a child is absent from school only occasionally, the counselor who works within the school may work with him, but if his absence continues or is chronic, he is referred to the attendance officer.

Both counselor[3] and attendance officer need to know as much as they can of the underlying reasons for his absence. Both must depend largely upon his own skill in "reading between the lines", in knowing what the child—or the parent—is telling other than by his words alone. Both must realize that the deepest most penetrating understanding will not of itself help the child, for they must go beyond understanding alone. Each must know how to reach out to the child or to his parent, how to share the child or parent's feeling without becoming so involved that he is helpless instead of helpful. Both must know how to bring something new and different to the situation so that the child or the parent or both can find support in the direction of change.

All of these, and the many other factors which we know today are

[3] *Counselor* is the term used in Philadelphia to designate the *home and school visitor* or *school social worker.*

inherent in social casework practice, are true for counselor[3] and attendance officer, and are equally true for caseworkers wherever they may be.

What, then, makes the attendance officer unique? What is the job which is peculiarly his own?

He represents by his very existence the reality of the statute books. Beyond all other avenues and levels of the educational structure of which he is a part, the attendance officer represents the school law. The authority which is vested in him is the dynamic which makes his job different and which can make his service meaningful and right for those who need it and for those who can use it.

Perhaps the most significant idea of this period, the concept which will later mark the progress of attendance work as professional practice during the 50's, is this very thought—that authority is our dynamic and not our shame. The concept of authority as a foundation for help, not as a personal weapon, to be personally combatted, is comparatively new. Ahead lies the struggle to find the best means within our own powers, and within the powers of our community structures, to exercise this dynamic in effective ways. The fact that we *do* exist to enforce the law can of itself be the enabling factor which gives us the power to help those who need this very difference. We cannot, however, pass lightly over the question of the compatability of the two major elements in our work, the conviction that we must be understanding and helpful and the simultaneous knowledge that we exist for the primary purpose of seeing that school and child labor laws are enforced.

We are not alone in learning how best to utilize this dynamic, for publications and discussions are appearing on all sides to indicate how keen is the interest in the field of casework within an authoritative setting. Caseworkers in courts and in prisons, those working with children returning from training schools, with parolees from prison, and so on, are seeking answers to many of the same problems which we face day in and day out.

The degree of authority which we need to exercise will vary from that which is inherent in our presence alone to the full authority invested in the courts, to which we turn when the need for their support is indicated.

Leonard P. was one of a large family of children, all presenting attendance problems throughout their school days. His father had deserted the family and the mother could almost never be seen because she was at work every day. Leonard was born with a cleft palate and harelip and never had any teeth. The school

had already referred him to their special speech teacher, and were concerned because his mother was uncooperative in following recommendations for dental and speech work and because the boy was frequently absent from school.

School principal, teacher, medical services, and psychological services, were all concerned and contributed fully of their time and efforts to help this little boy. (Counseling service was not available in this elementary school.) The attendance officer acted as the liaison person and was able to reach the mother at a time when she was at home. He found her, not uncooperative, but worried, anxious and overworked, with no real awareness of her child's condition nor of what could be done to help him. She had never felt that she could afford the time off from work to respond to the messages she received from the school, was not "very good" at writing, didn't really know how to go about replying.

With the help of the attendance officer, this mother was able to arrange clinic appointments and to follow through well with subsequent plans.

Obviously the attendance officer could not have functioned alone in this situation. The interest and technical knowledge and skills of the principal, teacher and other specialized school services gave him content for his work and community agencies supplied the necessary resources. He never needed to make this mother more aware of his authority in relation to the law than by his appearance at the home. What he met was a situation in which mother, as well as child, needed understanding and one in which help was eagerly received and promptly utilized.

The Cook family presents a different picture. Six children lived at home with their parents and maternal grandparents, the latter bedridden and chronically ill. Marked as "irresponsible and inadequate", these parents had already had numerous contacts with the attendance officer when John, the oldest boy of school age, presented such a serious attendance problem that further authoritative action seemed indicated. Faced with the necessity for taking some responsibility Mr. and Mrs. Cook were able to agree to voluntary placement in Shallcross Residental School and court commitment to that institution was not necessary. However, the breath of authority had to be heavy upon the Cooks before any change was effected.

A year later, when John was ready to return home, many things had changed. John himself had made a fine adjustment at Shallcross, and had used his experience there to the utmost. With the help of his counselor, he was able to verbalize quite clearly his hopes for his own future, hopes which had their first response in his transfer to a vocational school immediately upon his dismissal from Shallcross. Mrs. Cook, in the meantime, had worked with the attendance officer, who was still concerned about the absence of younger children, and with the Shallcross School counselor,[3] and was able to make sound plans for her parents who had hitherto claimed her attention, physically and emotionally, to the detriment of the children's welfare. The family moved to a new home near the school which John is now attending and the future is brighter for this boy's continued progress.

For some children and for some parents, unstable and emotionally insecure, only the firm authority of the court can provide the foundation upon which they can dare to move towards any change. For them only the sharp dynamic of authority is powerful enough to bring to focus the need for help and to set free those forces of the individual which can build upon the unique strengths of that particular human personality.

We are not alone in our concern over reaching the child who needs help but who cannot be reached. Some courts and probation departments are also looking at this problem with real concern, and psychiatric clinics, family agencies and other services have long been so engaged.

Robert Taber, the Director of our Division in Philadelphia, speaking to the Canadian Mental Health Association in Toronto last April, described the manner in which one of our neighboring communities is approaching this problem. Mr. Taber said, "As a part of the dynamic concept of authority, the Delaware County Juvenile Court of Pennsylvania has been exploring the two uses of the (Child Guidance) Clinic that are very promising. In some instances the Judge continues the case and refers the child and his parents to the clinic before making disposition. In others, the child is placed on probation. Both methods help the child and parents recognize the seriousness of the problem, because they realize the Court has continuing jurisdiction and that it is essential they come to grips with the reality of their problem. The Court also provides a support for the parent and child who are fearful of seeking help and who are quick to withdraw when they begin to appreciate their own responsibility and can no longer blame others for their situation. Although the psychiatrist is at first confronted by hostility and rebellion, he at least is exposed to the child and can often find a positive relationship once the child has drained himself of his venomous hate and deeply rooted fears."

Thus new methods and new concepts of the values and use of old ones mark our struggle and our movement towards better ways of working. That we have no reason and no time for indulgent self-approval is pointed up for us on all sides, by the frustrating situations which we face so very often and by the depressing statistics on juvenile delinquency.

But this steady confidence we can have. Just as the problems of living have multiplied and been highly accentuated by the complicated social patterns of our modern world, so has the body of knowledge pertaining to the human personality been widely enlarged. Left only to our own devices, we would be lost in our feeble efforts to help the child who

is absent from school. We are dependent upon what we can learn from the fields of education, medicine, psychiatry, psychology and social case-work. The present day attendance officer is facing squarely the need to develop his own professional discipline, to know himself for what he is in relation to the modern concept of human and social values of the young in our society. As our professional self-respect solidifies we can move with dignity among our professional colleagues in these other groups and attract to ourselves those new members who can in their turn bring depth to our knowledge and furtherance to our creative efforts.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a professional organization is a strengthening factor for the individual practicing within that profession. This is as true for the school social worker as it has long been for members of other professions. National Association of School Social Workers has members in 38 states and in Hawaii, Puerto Rico and India.

All members receive the National Association of School Social Workers Bulletin and other materials such as Newsletter, book lists, conference programs, notices, and other publicity. Membership is determined by the training and experience of the applicant.

Applications for membership and a statement of membership requirements may be obtained from the Membership Chairman, Mrs. Helen Roell, Indianapolis Public Schools, 150 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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The Bulletin is issued quarterly.

Single copies, 65 cents. Larger quantities at reduced rates.